



THE VOICE OF WESTERLEIGH

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERLEIGH IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

P.O. Box 140-043 Staten Island, NY 10314 www.wisonline.org

June, 2010 Vol. 2 NO. 88 Circulation: 850

MAYOR BLOOMBERG MAKES AN HISTORIC VISIT



Society Treasurer Joe Ficara, Secretary Evelyn Otten MacDonald, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, President Michael Morrell and Vice President Mark Anderson at June 1 meeting.

Even after 117 years, the Westerleigh Improvement Society can still find ways to top itself.

For the first time in its illustrious history, the Society played host to a sitting New York City mayor when Michael Bloomberg addressed the Society at its June 1 meeting in Immanuel Union Church.

So it was only fitting that Mr. Bloomberg made a little personal history of his own as the first thing he did after being introduced by President Michael Morrell was to reveal he was using an iPad for the first time.

According to the mayor, he's always interested in making government more efficient, and the newest Apple product seemed the logical place to begin, as he will now receive his morning briefing through technology rather than having his staff produce a ream of paper.

The mayor also brought along a number of his staff, including his newest deputy mayor Steve Goldsmith, who was introduced for the first time in public as Bloomberg's chief of operations.

Having dispensed with the formalities, Bloomberg then launched into a brief rundown of what was happening in and around the borough. "My job is to provide services for you and the city," he said, noting that there were 1308 days left in his administration to do just that. He announced that the long-anticipated groundbreaking for the new Stapleton Homeport project will be held soon, that crime declined in the city for the ninth consecutive year and that Staten Island schools were making quite a name for themselves citywide, including the news that Staten Island Tech had surpassed the esteemed Bronx School of Science and was currently ranked in the top 100 high schools in the nation according to U.S. News and World Reports.

He then opened the meeting to questions, and the first person to challenge the mayor on providing more services for the borough was Rose Margarella, who wanted to know why Staten Island couldn't get another hospital. "We're the only borough without a

city hospital,” she noted. While Mr. Bloomberg was sympathetic, he said he didn’t think another hospital would be opening for quite a while. First, he said, the city can’t afford one, and second, he said another hospital would spell economic disaster for both Staten Island University Hospital and Richmond University Medical Center. Even more controversial, according to the mayor, was his assertion that there were plenty of available beds in the Island’s two hospitals, a point on which a few people disagreed, especially with regards to emergency care facilities, and which the mayor eventually was forced to admit. The mayor was also defensive when it came to MTA bus route reductions, noting that his plan to increase ridership – congestion pricing – was defeated in Albany. “I know Staten Island is getting the short end of the stick,” he said with regard to these transit cuts, and aside from blaming Albany for part of the city’s budget crisis, he said he had no alternative.

On a more positive note, Mr. Bloomberg said the Island was faring better than the rest of the city when it came to parks, pointing out that the borough was the greenest spot in the city. He also noted the impending opening of Governors Island as another place for Islanders to visit.

In other areas, the mayor was quizzed on safety issues in Clove Lakes Park, asked about providing free museum passes for school children and coming up with a solution for alleviating truck traffic on Richmond Avenue. He also defended the schools for providing practically dawn-to-dusk care for students and the city’s free meals programs.

Perhaps the only area where the mayor seemed to be less than sympathetic to the Island’s plight was on the future of Pouch Camp, which drew the largest applause of the night when brought to the mayor’s attention. Answering a question posed by the members of Immanuel Union’s Boy Scout Troop 2 – 100 years old and still going strong – Mr. Bloomberg said the city’s hands seemed to be tied. The Boy Scouts, he said, were a private organization, and could do what they wished with their own property. “They have every right to sell it,” the mayor pointed out to the less-than-happy audience. Mr. Bloomberg then reminded the audience of 175 that he himself was an Eagle Scout, and perhaps in an effort to seem more concerned, announced that NYC Parks Commissioner Adrian Benape would be

meeting with Scouts shortly to discuss potential solutions.

Troop 2’s Color Guard was impressive in opening the meeting, and leading those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance and providing a stirring rendition of Taps, followed by a moment of silence.

The mayor was also accompanied by a number of local officials: Borough President James Molinaro; Councilman James Oddo; Deputy Inspector John Denisopolis of the 120th Precinct; and borough DOT head Thomas Cocola, just to name a few.

Debi Rose Speaks at Annual Meeting



On May 19 The Westerleigh Improvement Society held its Annual Meeting at the Immanuel Union Church. Featured speaker was our newly elected Council Member Debi Rose. Council Member Rose spoke about the upcoming Municipal Budget crisis. With a huge deficit, many choices have to be made as to what to cut. “We must avoid hurting those who need our help the most”, she said referring to the vulnerable segments of our community.

Other topics discussed in a question and answer period included transportation, water rates and schools. The Society was able to announce that capital funding was obtained to improve Westerleigh Park and to begin design work on improving the intersection of Manor Road and Victory Blvd.

Election of Directors was held and reelected were: Dan Rieu, Lou Motola, Mark Otten, Betty Winsch and Mark Zink.

A presentation was made to the PS 30 PTA representative Cindi Gerber for \$1700 for

the Society's co-sponsorship of the PS 30 Book Fair. Also present at the meeting was



President John Scalia of the Westerleigh Tennis Club who accepted a plaque in recognition of the Tennis Club's 100th Anniversary this year.

Capital Funding for Westerleigh

Borough President James Molinaro has recently informed the Society that funding will be included in the Fiscal 2011 budget for renovating Westerleigh Park and for the planning and redesign of the intersection of Manor Road and Victory Blvd.

The last major renovation of Westerleigh Park was undertaken in 1990 and usage and time has taken its toll on its physical features. The Borough President has allocated \$500,000 from his capital budget for the park renovation. In addition, he has earmarked \$1 million toward the reconstruction of the Manor Road and Victory Blvd. intersection.

Barrack Walk Through Westerleigh Held

On Saturday, May 29 the Annual Victoria Barrack Walk was held led by Society Vice President Mark Anderson. Beginning in Westerleigh Park Mark introduced the group of participants to the history of the park and its evolution in the history of Westerleigh.

Leaving the park the group walked through the historic streets of the community noting where the Auditorium once stood on Fisk Avenue, the location of home of poet Edwin Markham and the homes of members of the Funk family.

Mark traced the route of the trolley line that carried temperance advocates along Jewett Avenue to the Auditorium and also displayed photos of the homes along Jewett Avenue when Westerleigh was in its infancy. Other areas adjacent to the tour such as the location of the Keiber Farm were outlined by carefully detailed maps the Society was able to obtain from the Borough President's office.

The walk concluded with refreshments at the Immanuel Union Church and an opportunity to discuss the tour further with Society Historian Lou Motola. A printed guide for participants was prepared by Chuck Curiazza pinpointing all of the highlights of the tour.

Pouch Camp Must be Saved

At the May meeting of the Board of Directors, Kathy Vorwick and Alex Zablocki of the Save Pouch Camp campaign addressed the Society to ask for its support in preserving the camp for scouting for years to come.

Alex, an Eagle scout, narrated the powerpoint presentation for the Directors. Funding must be found to preserve the acreage that Pouch encompasses so that future generations of scouts will be able to use the facility as the only Scout camp in the City of New York.

After a brief discussion the Directors voted to support the effort.

William Schorkopf
Patriotic Sunday in Westerleigh Park
Sunday June 27, 2010 at 2 PM.
South Shore Band under **James DeFrancesco.**
Refreshments will be served.
Free bicycle raffles.

Borough President Molinaro
STARLIGHT CONCERT in WESTERLEIGH PARK
Thursday July 22, 2010 at 8-10 PM.
Featuring **THE BLUE MEANIES**
and
HEAD OVER HEELS.

Westerleigh Improvement Society, Inc.
P.O.Box 140-043
Staten Island, NY 10314

www.wisonline.org



Serving the Community for 117 years

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Borough Hall Helpline:

(718) 816-2000

120th Precinct:

(718) 876-8500

Congressman Michael McMahon

(718) 351-1062

State Senator Andrew Lanza:

(718) 984-4073

Assemblyman Matthew Titone:

(718) 442-9932

49th District Council Member Debi Rose

(718) 556-7370

50th District Councilman James Oddo:

(718) 980-1017

Public School 30:

(718) 442-0462

CommunityBoard #1:

(718) 981-6900

Westerleigh Improvement Society, Inc.

Officers:

President... **Mike Morrell**

Vice President... **Mark Anderson**

Treasurer... **Joe Ficara**

Secretary... **Evelyn Otten MacDonald**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me as a member of

Westerleigh Improvement Society Inc.

P.O. Box 140-043, Staten Island NY 10314

Annual Dues:

Regular Membership \$10 Associate Membership \$20

Membership # (3 digit number from upper left of mailing label)

Name

Address

Phone# (optional)

email (optional)